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ABSTRACT

Videotape recordings involve the viewers in a process which imparts immediacy and allows for the varied views and interpretations of those viewing it--unlike print which relegates information as something to be used later and which results in a response conditioned by the presentation. Experimental education should utilize this new technique to allow students to get in on the information process and become creators in the medium while learning its possibilities. The equipment needed to begin a program in school is fairly expensive--$1400-1600--but worth it in view of the mechanical skills which students learn, the creative development of students, and the communication understanding which results. Aside from the possibilities of using videotape within one school, its use as an important link to inform and consolidate varied and separated schools of what each is doing could also be valuable. (Some sources for further information on videotaping are listed.) (Author/SH)

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FROM CONNECTICUT TO NEBRASKA VIA VIDEOTAPE

Introduction:

I presented a workshop at the Nebraska conference that was unique because it incorporated a relatively new technique in education -- the videotape. I showed a videotaped interview of students and staff at the Inner College of the University of Connecticut discussing various aspects of the program there. The videotape presentation provided the opportunity for those still in Connecticut to have an effect on those attending the conference in Nebraska. It allowed me to carry thoughts, voices, and gestures of three students and three staff members of the Inner College in my satchel across thousands of miles to the Education Center at the University of Nebraska, and there to give a better picture of what the Inner College was about, how it related to the university, and what some students thought about it. Videotape made this possible in an immediate and engaging way.

The purpose of this paper will therefore be to show how video works, to deduce what ways this presentation affected those who saw it, how videotape can be incorporated into existing experimental programs and how it opens up new opportunities in experimental education.

How it works:

Video tape is the celluloid which dreams are recorded on. It is roughly ½" in width and can be used for recording up to 60 minutes of sight and sound. The machine I used to record was the Sony model AV3400 which weighs 25 lbs.

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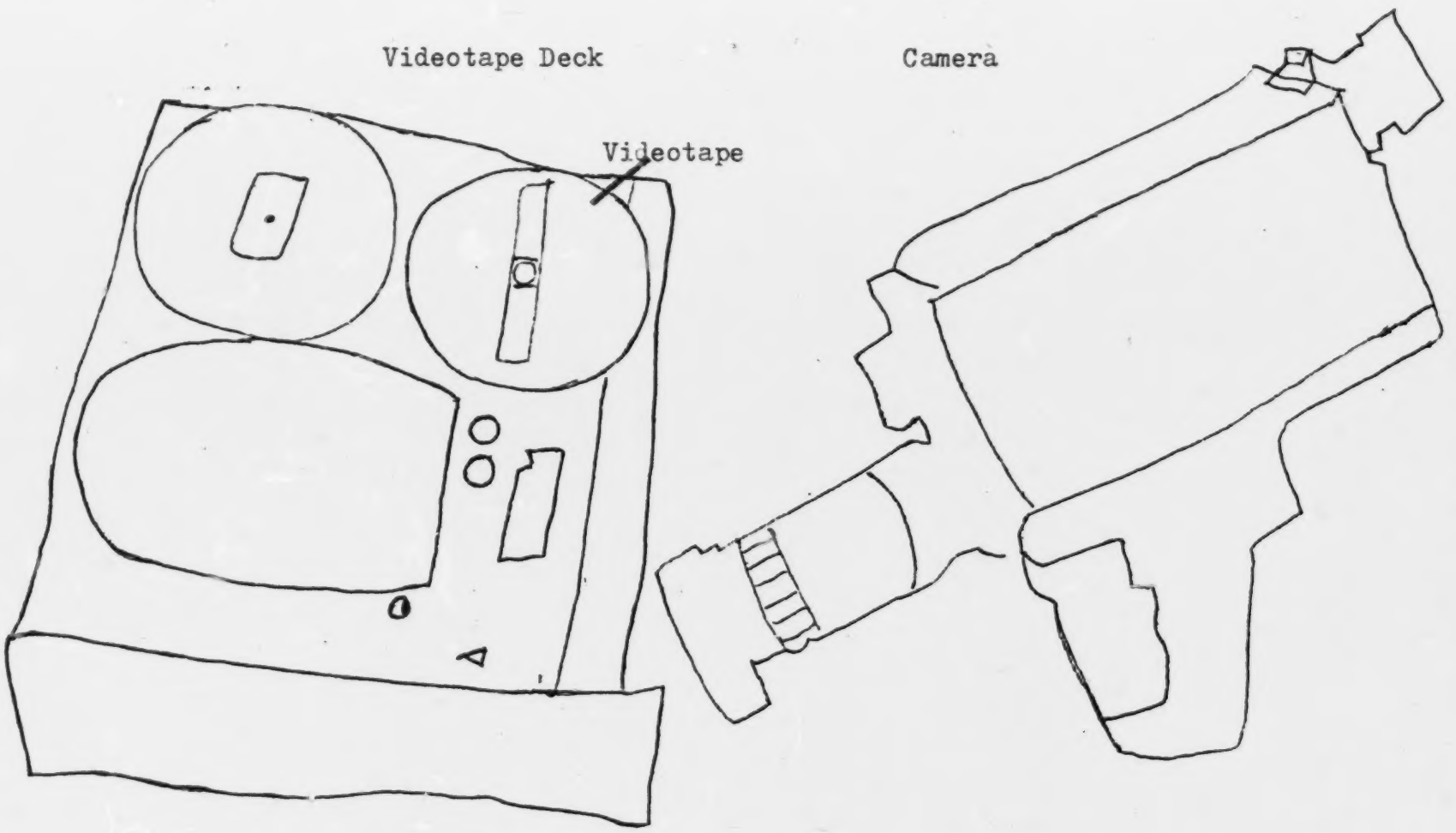
including the video camera and the recorder. Other models on the market include the Panasonic Concord, Shibaden Apeco, Craig, Ampex and Akai video-recorders. All enable you to record with sight and sound and to store for later playback.

Videotape machines have the following characteristics:



TAPE The video recorder weighs only 25 lbs. and is in effect, your own portable television recording studio. The camera illustrated puts a magnetic impulse onto a coated tape which is the same as an audiotape. Unlike regular film, the tape is immediately ready for replay and can be exposed to light without damage since no chemicals are involved. Just as audio tape may be used and

reused for different recordings, the same is true for the videotape. Erasures are made simultaneously with recording of new material and the new recording is ready to be played back immediately. The voice and picture are syncronous and are like those found on television.

The tapes cost about $22 per half hour but may be bought for less depending on how hard you look.

PORTAPAK The PortaPak is portable and runs on battery or AC current. The videotape used is threaded much like a tape recorder and passes through the recording heads to register the magnetic electric impulses from the camera.

CAMERA The camera looks like a super-8 and is about the same size. It has a built-in microphone for synchronous audiorecording and a zoom lens for various distance shots. You can monitor sound through an earphone, and monitor the picture through a little acreen under the camera's eyepiece.

How the videotape presentation affected those who saw it:

My video presentation was an interview with students and staff of the Inner College at the University of Connecticut. There were three students and three staff members present and I asked them various questions which were relevant to the question of "How does the Inner College relate to the outer university?".

I asked the students for their opinions on such topics as how the staff related to students (on a fairly equal basis); why the IC was a better learning environment than the outer university (more personal interaction among members, resources available are used flexibly, less bureaucracy, student initiated and taught courses, etc.); what roles students play in every day operations (an important and integral one - serving on all

committees). These questions and responses were recorded on the tape and I was able to carry these with me in a reel no bigger than 4" in diameter to present at the conference. The large group which watched and listened seemed to be intrigued and interested in what happened on the screen when I played it back. The morphology, or the form through which I was presenting the information, was different from the other workshops because I used videotape. Whereas the other workshops used the morphology of print in position papers, I utilized the morphology of television. Because print tends to separate the cause and effect, relegating information as something to be used later, it has a time lag and spontaneity is difficult to achieve. The videotape, however, involved the viewers in a process which was as immediate as their own eyes and ears would allow — the process had no time lag — the viewers were involved with a group of people still in Connecticut but very much in Nebraska — the effect was of imparting an immediacy on the viewers which resulted from the use of videotape. Instead of relegating information and viewpoint to one person reading a paper, the tape allowed for varied views and interpretations of those viewing it. This viewing resulted in much feedback.

The many and varied questions about the IC, its philosophies, organization, students, etc., were a result of the presentation which was unlike the standard paper-lecture-type presentation which is a progression of information resulting in a structured and often confined, and confining, response. The video tape allowed for a presentation which anyone could experience at any point and which afforded a maximizing of feedback response. I purposely did not edit the tape so that the feedback was not determined by anything except the process which occurred on the screen. In paper presentations, the information was presented in a linear, structured, narrow form, resulting in a response which was conditioned by it; it encourages a kind of passivity which is largely due to the one-way, speaker to listeners

direction. It is not all that different from the traditional lecturer and student role play. What I attempted to do, and the way I effected the viewers was to present not just my views of the IC but to include the views of many others. In addition, I attempted to show by the use of video, that this type of communication hasp possibilities within experimental education.

How video opens new opportunities in experimental education:

Experimental education should be experimental and utilize new and innovative techniques. The use of a new media for transmitting information is just such a technique...videotape allows students to get in on the information process and become creators in the medium while learning the possibilities. of it.

The first thing you'll need in order to start videotaping in your school is the equipment which ranges from $1,250-1,495 for the camera and videotape deck. In order to view creative endeavors atmonitor is needed and could run another $200. The total cost would be about $1,400-1,600. Over a short run it may weem like a bit much to lay out, but in the long run, it is worth it in the skills students learn, the creative exercises which develope and the communication understanding which results.

SKILLS: The mechanics of videotaping take a short time to learn. Perhaps an hour or so is enough for most people to become familiar with the machine, and skill developes as practice takes place. It's a little more difficult to learn how to do special effects and edit, but basic operation of the videotape can be learned in a short period of time. [see "How it works"]

CREATIVE EXERCISES DEVELOPE: Students readily take to video tape and develope their own moments taping if allowed to do so: students may tape regular

shows off the air and put their own comments in about them, they may have interviews with themselves or others; interview a teacher, a principle, a dean, the superindendant. They may put on their own news programs and report on what's happening in the school, the town, city, county, world...from their viewpoint. Maybe the folks back home would be interested to know what goes on at the next national education conference; send a videotape crew to get the lowdown.

This is what the education catalog, Big Rock Candy Mountain Winter, 1970 p. 53 says about using videotape in a free environment:

1) Videotape is not film. You needn't script what you shoot or edit the results into a final product. The tape is erasable and its capacity for immediate playback permits uses impossible with film. Record and playback and erase and record again what seems to be useful and interesting at the time. Shoot first and ask questions later.

2) Videotape is not television. Don't make record sessions into studio exercises or playback sessions into passive engagements with the tube. Arrange the equipment to fit in naturally with what's going on--i.e. have plenty of extension cords around and avoid cumbersome studio accessories like lights--freely intersperse recording, monitoring, responding, sequentially or simultaneously. The sooner you break students of standard TV roles (MC, cameraman, audience,etc.) and mindsets about the programming, the sooner they'll enthusiastically enter the process of discovering what can be learned via videotape.

3) Videotape is a means of perceptual discovery and interaction; it demands uses more creative than the consumption of instructional knowledge. Students must become agents in initiating and participating in video projects, with

real control over the information generated and its use. The moment kids see themselves as subjects or targets for educational TV, they'll tune out. Teachers must make themselves equally vulnerable to exposure on videotape and be open and honest about the discoveries they make."

Videotape allows one to have a feedback agent which not only shows an individual how he/she acts-reacts, creates, etc. in different situations, but also can show staff and students in a free school how they interact together in a group. The individual and group dynamics of a school can thus be in some way viewed through videotape feedback. Once videotape is utilized by students and staff in school, the time is right for some sort of interplay between various schools.

New opportunities for use of videotape in experimental education:

Videotape can be seen as one of the means through which the cultural inforamtion which our education developes and perpetuates is transported to other people. The videotape can be used as an important link between experimetal programs in a city, state, region, or the nation. What I would propose is an experimental educational exchange which would utilize videotape as a means to consolidate and inform varied and seperated schools of what each is doing.

For example, one program is doing a scene from Midsummers Night's Dream, videotapes it, and sends it to a school which has just had Orson Welles come and speak on directing. Orson is then sent back in exchange for the scene.

The same can be done for specific inquiries: i.e. a school may need to know how to go about applying for a grant. The request could be met by videotaped instruction and guidance on how to do so.

Experiences are thus shared in a way never occurring before in education. Tapes from video groups can also be purchased or rented as much as films are today, offering another source of a more commercial type of information. With the introduction of cable television, it is feasible that information can be had by schools at the push of a button. Because cable television not only has many channels (20-40) but also has the characteristics of two-way communication, it is possible that tapes stored in a central point could be utilized for information needed by different experimental programs. Each program could be cabled to a central computer bank where information could be stored. At the turn of a dial or the push of a button on the cabled TV set, a student could send a coded request for the information he/she requires. ~~This would mean that~~ Whatever information is put in the band by the members of the program group utilizing it, would be made available upon request at the speed of light. As a book or piece of information is flashed on the screen in response to a request, it would be possible to have a photostatic copy of the material made alongside the picture.

This instant and televised information can do much to increase communication, knowledge and education taking place in alternative education. Videotape points the way.

I would like to conclude this paper by stating that the uses of videotape to record, store and desseminate information and develope communication skills in experimental rpograms is limited only by the imagination of those who use it as a medium.

Its potential is fantastic and offers the opportunity for tremendous coordination and information exchange within experimental education itself. It is up to us to see that it is put to use and helps make our dreams for alternative education realities.

For further information on videotaping, the following sources are listed:

Videogroup of the Inner College, Inner College U-167, University of Connecticut,

Storrs, Connecticut 06268.

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